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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [OA](#)

SUBJECT: AMERICAN BUSINESSES IN QATAR EAGER TO DO THEIR PART ON LABOR

REF: A. 04 DOHA 1670

- [B](#). 04 DOHA 1739
- [C](#). DOHA 687
- [D](#). DOHA 688
- [E](#). DOHA 858
- [F](#). DOHA 1132

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. Post continues its effort to promote labor standards and raise awareness of labor issues in Qatar. Recent efforts culminated in a presentation by Qatari Labor Department officials to the American Business Council of Qatar. The presentation highlighted the growing interest and concern on the part of American businesses to gain a better understanding of the new labor law that came into effect last January, as well as the overall labor situation in Qatar. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Previous efforts by Post to reach out to "labor stakeholders" focused on government officials (reftel 04 DOHA 1670), source country embassies and third country nationals (reftel DOHA 1132). More recently, that effort was extended to include American businesses. In early spring, Poloff met with American business leaders to discuss the new labor code (reftel 04 DOHA 1739) that had come into effect and its implication for American businesses. Also discussed was the overall labor situation in the country (refrels DOHA 687, DOHA 688, DOHA 858) and what, if anything, American businesses could do to help improve that situation. From these discussions it became apparent that while American business leaders were cognizant of the new labor code and held basic knowledge of the law, they remained unsure about their responsibilities and the implications of the many provisions for their companies. Further, many expressed a desire to learn more about the new law and their obligations under it.

[1](#)3. (U) To reach out more effectively and broadly to American businesses, Poloff made the suggestion to Dr. Barclay Collins, the president of the American Business Council of Qatar (ABCQ), to hold a discussion of the new labor law at one of its monthly meetings. Poloff also offered to speak with Khaled Al Sulaiti, the director of the Labor Department, and invite him to make a presentation to the ABCQ. The president was very eager to have a representative from the Labor Department address the ABCQ.

[1](#)4. (U) On September 28, the director of the Labor Department and another official from the employment division were the featured speakers of the first ABCQ meeting of the season. The meeting was well attended and included representatives from diverse sectors. The presentation provided a review of the new labor code and its provisions. There were numerous questions following the presentation. The questions ranged from the very basic to more complex ones regarding worker contracts and compensation.

[1](#)5. (U) While the questions raised demonstrated that there is still some ignorance and confusion about the myriad provisions of the new labor code, the participants were clearly cognizant of the growing importance of the labor issue in the country. Further, the interest and attentiveness of the participants indicated a broader concern with ensuring that their companies were, at a minimum, in compliance with the new regulations. Overall, American businesses appear keen, not only to comply with the new labor codes, but also to do their part in improving the labor situation in Qatar. Finally, the presentation laid the foundation for further contact between American businesses and Labor Department officials. Both the ABCQ and Labor Department officials appeared enthusiastic on following up on this meeting.

[1](#)6. (U) Comment. Labor remains a serious issue in Qatar. Indeed, it is rare lately to pick up a local daily paper and not find some mention of an incident involving laborers or initiatives being undertaken by source country embassies on behalf of their nationals. While the increased reporting does not necessarily correlate to a growing labor crisis in Qatar, it does demonstrate an increased willingness to talk about labor issues and problems in the country, especially in the aftermath of the new labor law. Also promising is that the increased "labor discourse" is not limited to the media. Post will continue to engage government officials, foreign

embassies as well as business representatives on this
critical issue. End Comment.
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